



## THE HOMEMAKER AND FARM PRODUCTION

Talk by Mrs. Raymond Ricketts, a Farm Homemaker,  
Member of the Southwest Electric Cooperative,  
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The more quickly and efficiently a farm woman can do her housework, the more assistance she can give to such jobs as caring for poultry, growing and preserving food, and, in emergencies, helping with the barnwork and field work. That's what electricity has meant in our home. Perhaps you have heard about the superstition that my grandmother believed. She said it was bad luck to sweep the kitchen after supper. In the last few years I have learned why that may have had some truth in it. In her day you couldn't even see how to sweep the kitchen or any other room after supper.

Now in our home in the busy season I can not only sweep my kitchen after the evening meal but I can do all the other kitchen work. My kitchen being well lighted is perhaps one of the biggest helps I have, because that is where I spend about 60 percent of my waking hours.

Four years ago at this time I was filling kerosene lamps and cleaning globes. This took from 15 to 30 minutes a day. Besides that inconvenience I had to carry one around with me from the table to the cabinet or to the stove to see what I was cooking.

My modern range is such a labor saver, it is almost impossible to describe -- no more carrying wood in, no ashes to carry out; and if there is work to be done outside, I merely set the automatic control and go on about my business and come back to a meal ready for the table.

Before electricity came to us I had to store my milk, vegetables, butter, etc., either on the screened-in back porch or in the basement. Of course, that meant many trips before each meal was prepared.

Now with an electric refrigerator in my kitchen all this has changed. It is not only an economical place to store food but there are also so many tasty desserts that can be made by putting it to use, such as gelatin desserts and the old fashioned homemade ice cream. In fact, one might think that my boys think more of the refrigerator than their mother -- they always head for it first.

The addition of the home freezer to the farm home certainly shouldn't be underestimated. The fresh fruits and vegetables which my family enjoy so much this time of year are in easy reach if you have this appliance installed in your kitchen or basement. Not only do these foods have a better flavor and color, they retain all their food value which we know means so much in the proper growth and development of our children. Besides, storing food in this manner is a big time saver. It has been proven that by storing food in a home freezer -- instead of canning -- you save at least 23 handlings; it takes 27 handlings for canning and only four for freezing.



However, this hasn't completely done away with home canning, especially in my home where we store approximately 600 quarts of fruits, vegetables and meats each year -- but it has helped greatly to lighten the load. There are five in our family.

Before leaving the house I want to mention some of the smaller appliances which save labor as well as time. Perhaps they are not as essential as some of the larger ones, but just try to take them away from the housewife who has used them and she would immediately tell you they were very essential to her. I mention especially the electric mixer because it is a housewife's right arm.

Have you men ever been asked to help make the Christmas candy, especially when it comes to the beating? I asked my husband to help me one year and after about 2 minutes he handed the beater back to me tired out -- and he thinks he's a pretty strong man.

Of course, candy is just a small item, because we don't make candy every day, but the everyday things we can do with a mixer make an almost endless list, such as mashing potatoes, mixing cakes, churning, grinding meats and extracting juices.

The electric vacuum cleaner rates very high on my list of appliances. Although it isn't used every day, the farm home certainly has more use for it than any city dweller. This is true because we can't look in the paper and call someone to come and help us with our house cleaning. We must rely on ourselves.

In fact, this appliance has almost eliminated the old fashioned spring and fall house cleaning, because we now do our cleaning systematically.

Another appliance which I have and which I consider is a big time and money saver is a pair of electric hair clippers. Having been a beautician before my marriage, I had some training in barbering. So when I sold my shop, I kept my electric hair clippers. Now with my husband and three boys they have certainly come in handy. I do all of our own barbering. The cost of four hair cuts about every three weeks soon amounts up. I figure I save at least \$4.00 per month with my clippers. This saving alone will go a long way on our monthly electric bill.

Just about Thanksgiving last fall we installed an electric motor-driven oil furnace. It is completely automatic and is one of the greatest conveniences, as well as labor savers, we have ever known.

Prior to this winter I fired two wood stoves and part of the time a fire place. This took at least 2-1/2 hours of my time each day. The amount of wood consumed during a season was from 12 to 15 cords. Buying and getting the wood into the house took about 150 hours of my husband's time each season. This year he is using this time for farming purposes.

My laundry work also has been lightened beyond description since we installed our deep well water system. I don't think I could ever again draw enough water with a bucket and rope for a washing, but how well I remember the two pails I always took to the well and how I would hardly get back to the house and get a job started when they were empty again.



However, drawing water for the family wash was a little too much for me, so my husband always had to get up about 30 minutes earlier on wash day to get the water I would need. Then we'd carry it to a wood stove which we had especially for this purpose in our basement.

Now our water is in the kitchen and bath as well as the basement, and all the effort required on my part for any amount of water is a turn of the faucet. I have never really thought about the time this has save me, because I was more concerned about my back. But tests show that before electrical equipment and running water it took the average farm wife 4-1/2 hours to do her weekly laundry. She washed 116 pounds of wet clothes and carried 730 pounds of water to do the job.

Now with an electric washing machine, the laundry day is no more a drudgery. The electric washer and the electric water heater combine to make the washing job about a 2-hour task.

It might also be of interest to you men to know that women in our community no longer throw flat irons at their husbands because they no longer have such a thing. They are so proud of their automatic electric irons they won't hardly let anyone else pick them up -- let alone throw them.

Some of my neighbors are lucky enough to own an ironer, which saves even more time. I don't have one but am looking forward to the day that one comes into my home.

Tests made by Westinghouse on the home appliances I have mentioned save the average farm wife 111 eight-hour days in a year's time. Of course, farm wives don't operate on an eight-hour day basis but this is still a lot of time saved.

I suppose if I had to pick out one thing that electricity does for me, and let the rest be taken away, I'd take water, because we find it has become a necessity in almost all our farm operations. For instance, when a garden crop, such as beans or tomatoes, are about ready to be stored, and a drought comes upon them, all I have to do is connect the garden hose and they will be saved.

Not only just these crops, but it is a proven fact that gardens sprinkled or irrigated regularly will produce almost 50 percent more with improved quality and flavor.

The gardener is finding more uses for electricity all the time, and a very practical one is the wired hotbed. By this method we can produce early plants, and because of early, as well as successive plantings, we are able not only to fill our own food supply, but help increase our national food stockpile.

As a usual thing in general farming it is the farm wife's chore to care for the poultry. In brooding our chicks we now have access to an electric brooder with no flame or fire hazard and a good even heat.

Electric lights and plenty of fresh water piped to the laying house has brought egg production up to a new high. In fact, in many poultry-raising communities the poultry business has been made almost a push-button operation.



This water seems to have an endless course because from here it takes us to the dairy barn.

Our section of the country is noted for dairying. Electricity has made it possible to have Grade A milking barns. As a result, we are paid a premium for our milk.

Of course, many factors go into producing milk. First, it is composed of 87 percent water so you can readily see the importance of plenty of fresh water for the dairy herd.

In our day things are no longer produced on a small scale. In fact, most successful farmers have learned to produce on the factory mass production scale. So by the use of the milking machine and the electric milk cooler, not only more, but much better quality milk is produced and saved.

Also found around the modern barn is the electric feed grinder. This not only saves the farmer the time of taking feed to the local mill, but also assures a fresh supply on hand when it is needed.

Another boon to farmers, especially those growing alfalfa hay, is the modern hay dryer. This not only lets farmers store their hay when it is ready but retains a lot more of the forage that was lost in the field.

We have 10 acres of alfalfa and last year we were able to get four cuttings which was about 40 tons, besides our other hay crops. This hay is also more nutritious and the better a dairy herd is fed, the better quality and quantity of milk is produced.

While we specialize in dairy farming there are also pigs to be brooded on our farm, with the electric pig brooder. We no longer have to wait on seasons for sow farrowing. They can now be brooded so they will go on the market at peak prices. The electric pig brooder also lowers the mortality rate per litter.

In our community, the hired hand is an almost out-dated thing. But to take its place we have a much more economical, as well as dependable, hand and it is the "wired hand."

Keeping in mind all the helps I have already mentioned, and the others I am going to mention, you'll see at once what I mean. Another of these is the portable electric motor. A few of its uses are: Sawing wood, sharpening tools, spraying paint, shelling corn, mixing concrete, and fanning seed. Is it any wonder we call these our helping hand?

Some of the things yet to come to our community are the barn and poultry house electric fan ventilators, and the REA telephone.

While we are enjoying all the benefits of electricity, we must take the best possible care of our appliances. Steel, as well as other metals, is being curtailed for military use. Before too long we may not be able to go to the store and buy appliances as we have in the past. This is just another way we can help with national defense.



With the help of the modern appliances I now enjoy, I find I can accomplish much more at home, as well as find time for some outside activities.

I am now P.T.A. president, have helped with the Red Cross blood mobile, which comes to our community about every six months. I also belong to a W.P.F.A. farm club, I attend church and Sunday School regularly, and if the emergency should arise, I'm sure I could find time to help out with any project that will help strengthen our national defense.

So in closing, may I impress this upon you -- there isn't a war going on on our farms today, but there is a great revolution. It's a revolution of electrical appliances for lifting food production to a new high. When we operate our farms with the help of electricity -- which in itself is a secret weapon -- we as a Nation need not be afraid to face any emergency.

